

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 227154

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ORIGIN ARA-10

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY PANAMA IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS STATE 227154

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS:PFOR, PN

SUBJECT: PRESS GUIDANCE

1. FOLLOWING PRESS GUIDANCE HAS BEEN PREPARED FOR USE BY DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN ON AN IF ASKED BASIS (NOTE: SUBJECT NOT RAISED AT 9/14 PRESS BRIEFING).

2. BEGIN QUOTE

Q: THE EMBASSY OF PANAMA YESTERDAY WAS CRITICAL OF U.S. DELAY IN RE-OPENING TALKS ON THE CANAL TREATY. DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENT ON THIS?

A: NO DATE HAS AS YET BEEN FIXED FOR THE NEXT ROUND OF TALKS WITH PANAMA, BUT I WANT TO EMPHASIZE THAT THE UNITED STATES IS COMMITTED TO A SERIOUS EFFORT TO ACCOMMODATE THE MUTUAL INTERESTS AND ASPIRATIONS OF BOTH THE UNITED STATES AND PANAMA. BOTH SIDES HAVE MADE PROGRESS IN THE LAST TWO AND A HALF YEARS BUT SEVERAL DIFFICULT ISSUES REMAIN. EACH UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 02 STATE 227154

SIDE APPRECIATES THE COMPLEXITY OF THE ISSUES AND IS NOW

DOING THE TOUGH HOMEWORK NECESSARY FOR THE NEXT TALKS.

Q: CAN YOU CONFIRM THAT AMBASSADOR BUNKER DID INDEED MEET WITH THE NEGOTIATORS OF THE GOP IN THE PAST FEW DAYS?

A: AMBASSADOR BUNKER AND HIS DEPUTIES LUNCHEDED INFORMALLY WITH AMBASSADOR GONZALEZ-REVILLA ON SEPTEMBER 8 HERE IN WASHINGTON.

Q:WHAT DID AMBASSADOR BUNKER TELL THE PANAMANIAN REGARDING THE NEGOTIATIONS?

A: I CANNOT COMMENT IN DETAIL ON DISCUSSIONS WHICH AMBASSADOR BUNKER HAS HAD WITH THE PANAMANIAN AMBASSADOR HERE.

(SPOKESMAN: IF PRESSED, YOU MAY CONTINUE AS FOLLOWS: I WOULD POINT OUT, HOWEVER, THAT THE PRESS REPORT TO WHICH YOU REFER IS INCOMPLETE AND DOES NOT GIVE A BALANCED ACCOUNT OF THE CONVERSATION WHICH THE TWO NEGOTIATORS HAD HERE. AS I HAVE SAID, NO DATE HAS BEEN FIXED FOR THE NEXT ROUND OF TALKS WITH PANAMA BUT THE PREPARATIONS FOR SUCH A ROUND ARE GOING FORWARD AND WE REMAIN COMMITTED TO SERIOUS EFFORT TO ACCOMMODATE THE MUTUAL INTERESTS AND ASPIRATIONS OF BOTH COUNTRIES.

Q: IS THERE ANY SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE TO THE STUDENT RIOTING IN PANAMA?

A: WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE RECENT DISTURBANCES ARE CONCERNED MAINLY WITH ECONOMIC ISSUES IN THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA -- PARTICULARLY THE PRICE OF FOOD COMMODITIES.

Q: THEY ARE NOT IN SOME WAY CONNECTED TO THE CANAL NEGOTIATIONS?

A: NOT AS FAR AS WE KNOW. ROBINSON

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